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REASON & REVELATION

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Years?



Jephthah's Daughter, the Levites, and Symbolic Sacrifices

Eric Lyons, M.Min.

MOST Bible students recall the brief story of Jephthah and his daughter in Judges 11:29-40. Upon becoming Judge of Israel, “the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah” and “he advanced toward the people of Ammon” (11:29). “And Jephthah made a vow to the Lord, and said, ‘If You will indeed deliver the people of Ammon into my hands, then it will be that whatever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the people of Ammon, shall surely be the Lord’s, and I will offer it up as a burnt offering’” (11:30-31). According to Holy Writ, Jephthah defeated Ammon, and his daughter was the first to meet him when he returned home (11:32-34), which meant she was to “be the Lord’s,” offered as “a burnt offering.” Judges 11:39 states: Jephthah “carried out his vow with her which he had vowed.”

Is it possible that Jephthah literally sacrificed his daughter as a “burnt offering” (Judges 11:29-40)? Yes, it’s possible. (Sadly, many children in ancient history were sacrificed at the hands of powerful leaders, including some evil kings of Judah; 2 Chronicles 28:1-3; 33:6-9). But if Jephthah actually sacrificed his

daughter, he committed a grave sin, since literal human burnt offerings were condemned by God (Deuteronomy 12:31; 18:10). Furthermore, if Jephthah actually burned his daughter in sacrifice to the Lord, he did so without God ever approving his actions (and such silence on God’s part cannot reasonably be interpreted as approval).¹

A much better explanation to the Jephthah question centers around the fact that sometimes a “sacrifice” is offered in a figurative sense. In addition to modern man often speaking metaphorically of “sacrificing” money, sleep, time, energy, etc. for good causes, consider that such figurative sacrificing also took place in ancient Israel. In fact, hundreds of years before Jephthah’s day, ever since the Israelites escaped Egyptian bondage following the tenth plague (the death of the firstborn of Egypt), the people of Israel “offered” both man and beast to God. Jehovah “consecrated...all the firstborn, whatever opens the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and beast; it is Mine,” says the Lord (Exodus 13:2).

There is a sense in which “**all** males that open the womb” were “sacrificed to the Lord” (Exodus

13:15). But exactly how were all the firstborn males offered in a special way to God? Were they all literally sacrificed as a burnt offering? All the firstborn males among **clean** animals/livestock were **literally burned**, but not among the unclean. **Unclean** animals, such as the donkey, were “**redeemed**” with a lamb (Exodus 13:13; Numbers 18:15). That is, the donkey was to be delivered or rescued from a sacrificial death with a replacement.² Similarly, “all the firstborn of man” among the Israelites were redeemed.

Rather than literally sacrifice the firstborn male children of the Israelites (as they did their livestock—Exodus 13:2,12-16; 22:29-30), God set apart the Levites for Himself for religious service (“that they may perform the work of the Lord,” Numbers 8:11).

God said: “I Myself have taken the Levites from among the children of Israel instead of every firstborn who opens the womb among the children of Israel. Therefore the Levites shall be mine, because all the firstborn are Mine. On the day that I struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, I sanctified to Myself all the firstborn in Israel, both man and beast. They shall be Mine: I am the Lord” (Numbers 3:12-13).

How were the clean animals given to the Lord? In literal sacrifices. How were the firstborn male humans given to the Lord? Not in literal burnt offerings, but in sacrificial service to God (cf. Romans 12:1).

Interestingly, Numbers 8 indicates that the consecration of the Levites was a type of offering—a symbolic wave offering. After God instructed the Israelites to “lay their hands on the Levites” (as they were “offering” them as a sacrifice to the Lord; cf. Leviticus 4:13-15), He said:

Aaron shall **offer** the Levites before the Lord as a **wave offering from the people of Israel**, that they may do the service of the Lord. Then the Levites shall lay their hands on the heads of the bulls, and you shall offer the one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering to the Lord to make atonement for the Levites. And you shall set the Levites before Aaron and his sons, and shall **offer them as a wave offering to the Lord**.

Thus you shall separate the Levites from among the people of Israel, and the Levites shall be mine. And after that the Levites shall go in to serve at the tent meeting, when you have cleansed them and **offered them as a wave offering**. For they are wholly given to me from among the people of Israel. Instead of all who open the womb, the firstborn of all the people of Israel, I have taken them for myself. For all the firstborn among the people of Israel are mine, both of man and of beast. On the day that I struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt I consecrated them for myself, and I have taken the Levites instead of all the firstborn among the people of Israel (Number 8:10-18).³

Like the Levites, who were symbolically offered before the Lord, it is very likely that Jephthah similarly “sacrificed” his daughter. She could have been “sacrificed” as a “burnt offering” at the tabernacle **in the sense** that she became one of the “serving women who assembled at the door of the tabernacle” (Exodus 38:8; cf. 1 Samuel 2:22). Perhaps like Anna centuries later, Jephthah’s daughter was “offered” to serve God “with fastings and prayers night and day,” never again to leave the area of the tabernacle (cf. Luke 2:36-38). Such a figurative offering makes perfect sense in light of the fact that Jephthah’s daughter and her friends **never lamented**

her death. They mourned—just not her death. What was their sorrow? They “bemoaned her **virginity**” (Judges 11:38). In fact, three times her virginity is mentioned (11:37-39), the last of which is noted immediately following the revelation that Jephthah “carried out his vow with her which he had vowed. **She knew no man**” (11:39).

If Jephthah sinfully killed his daughter as a literal burnt offering, the repeated bemoaning of her virginity makes no sense.⁴ As Dave Miller concluded, such statements are “completely superfluous and callous...if she had been put to death.”⁵ On the other hand, if Jephthah’s daughter was about to be “offered” to God to serve perpetually at His tabernacle, and to live the rest of her life as a single, childless servant of the Lord, it makes perfect sense that she and her friends would lament her lasting virginity. When we allow the Bible to explain the Bible, the **symbolic offering** of Jephthah’s daughter makes perfect sense.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Admittedly, Judges 11:29 indicates that “the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah” prior to his journey through Gilead, Manasseh, and Mizpah. Having “the Spirit of the Lord,” however, does not mean a person could never sin and do foolish things (e.g., Samson). This phrase is found seven times in Judges. It can indicate God’s consecration of a judge, such as in Othniel’s case, when “the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he judged Israel” (Judges 3:10). At other times, it refers more to the courage and superhuman strength that the Lord provided them, such as in Samson’s case (Judges 14:6; 14:19; 15:14). Jephthah was a courageous leader, but he was not without sin (Judges 11:3; Romans 3:23).
- ² If the owner of the donkey did not want to redeem the donkey, he then had to “break its neck” (Exodus 13:15). However, he could not sacrifice it. In short, the donkey had to be redeemed or killed.
- ³ ESV, emp. added.
- ⁴ If someone was about to kill your unmarried daughter, would you feel the need to mourn her virginity or her imminent death?
- ⁵ Dave Miller (2013), “Jephthah’s Daughter,” *Reason & Revelation*, 33[8]:95, August, <http://apologeticspress.org/apPubPage.aspx?pub=1&issue=1131&article=2179>.

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Making a Brief Case *Against* Evolution and *For* Creation to the School Board

Jeff Miller, Ph.D.

WE were recently contacted by a Christian science teacher who had an opportunity to go before the school board in his county to present the case for alternatives to evolution, like Creation, being taught in the county's science classes. He asked for our input concerning the points that he should make in his brief presentation. In the interest of helping others who wish to do the same, I am reproducing my response here.

If I were to go before a school board for such a purpose, I would make the single argument that our children should only be taught reasonable, rational science: science that is based on evidence, rather than superstition and blind faith. I would then expound on that argument by making two basic points:

1. Naturalistic evolution (which is increasingly advocated in science classrooms across the country) is irrational and even self-contradictory:
 - Naturalism requires a blind faith (i.e., is irrational), since several of its most fundamental, required tenets have absolutely no evidence to support them and are, in fact, counterintuitive (e.g., the origin of the laws of nature¹; the origin of the Universe²; the origin of

matter/energy³; the origin of life⁴; the origin of genetic information⁵; and macroevolutionary change⁶). Naturalists often point the finger at those who accept Creation and say that Creation is not based on scientific evidence, but in truth, naturalism is the model that is guilty of that charge.⁷ Should a model that requires a blind faith be taught in our science classes? Does that not contradict the most fundamental purpose of science?

- Naturalism is self-contradictory.⁸ One cannot be a naturalist and simultaneously believe in unnatural events (i.e., events that do not happen in nature, like the spontaneous generation of laws of science, the spontaneous generation of matter/energy, the spontaneous generation of life, or the spontaneous generation of genetic information). In truth, there is no such thing as a naturalist, because every **naturalist** must believe that something **unnatural** (make that, **super-natural**) happened at some point in order to explain the Universe today.⁹ Should a model that is self-contradictory be taught in our science classrooms?
- Bottom line: naturalism is an irrational, blind faith that should not be taught to our kids. It is a modern, "respectable" form of superstition. It is like witchcraft in that it

advocates the magical, causeless appearance of universes and the spontaneous animation of non-living matter, like the monster of Frankenstein. In fact, it is worse than witchcraft, since naturalism advocates witchcraft-like activity, but without the existence of an actual witch to do it.

2. The Creation model is scientific, being backed by scientific evidence. It is not a blind faith.

- While it is true that creationists cannot "observe" or directly "experiment" on God, Creation, the Flood, or alleged miraculous activity, it is also true that naturalists have not observed or verified by experiment several fundamental, necessary tenets of the evolutionary model (like those mentioned above, as well as the "Big Bang," inflation, or a multiverse, which many leading naturalistic cosmologists are now promoting), and yet naturalism is deemed to be "scientific." The nature of the "evidence" in favor of the naturalistic model is not observational, and yet it is considered valid. The reason such thinking is considered legitimate is that when we are attempting to ascertain what happened in the distant past, we have to engage in **historical** science, not **observational** science—two different approaches that are used in gathering evidence and attempting to arrive at logical conclusions. Historical science is necessary in many cases in the fields of biology, geology, paleontology, cosmology, and meteorology when studying events of the Universe and on Earth in the distant past. The nature of the evidence in historical science is **indirect**, rather than **direct** observation, and yet the evidence is valid. Forensic science is a classic case of science using indirect evidence. Although forensic scientists do not directly witness the crime

that they are studying, they can determine a lot through indirect evidence. The case for the biblical Creation model is based on the same principle, that is, some of the events of the distant past that are mentioned in Scripture (e.g., the Flood) can be studied and verified using indirect evidence, even though some of the events of the Bible cannot be directly observed or replicated today.

- Scientific study has led to the realization that the Universe is replete with examples of design—characteristics of the Universe that indicate planning, intent, purpose, and complexity.¹⁰ The presence of design implies a designer as surely as a poem implies the existence of a poet. Theists are not the only ones who acknowledge the existence of design in the Universe. Leading **naturalistic** scientists have had to admit that the Universe appears to be designed—finely tuned for life.¹¹
- Biblical Creation is scientific since it can make verifiable scientific predictions—many of which have already been verified.¹²

I would close the presentation by once again highlighting to the school board that our children should only be taught reasonable, rational science that is based on the evidence, and not superstitious assertions and conjecture—“just-so stories”—regardless of the number of scientists with advanced degrees who advocate them. Arguing that a position is true merely because a highly credentialed person adheres to the position is a logical fallacy known as “appeal to authority.”¹³ Those considered to be the “authorities” of a subject have often been wrong, historically. Determination of what is true should be based on the actual facts or evidence, only drawing conclusions warranted by the evidence.¹⁴

The above argumentation could be made in a presentation lasting roughly five minutes. Using a PowerPoint presentation is recommended, wherein the above points are outlined briefly and sources are flashed on the screen for the points you are making. A “recommended reading list” could be put on a final slide, listing several Creation science books written by highly qualified scientists in the field.¹⁵

ENDNOTES

1. “Creation by God,” *Reason & Revelation*, 32[12]:137-140.

2. “Laws of Science: The Law of Causality,” Apologetics Press, <http://www.apologeticspress.org/apcontent.aspx?category=9&article=3716>.

3. “Laws of Science: The Laws of Thermodynamics,” Apologetics Press, <http://apologeticspress.org/APContent.aspx?category=12&article=2786>.

4. “Genesis [Part I],” *Reason & Revelation*, 32[1]:2-11.

5. “Laws of Science: Genetics vs. Evolution [Part 1],” *Reason & Revelation*, 34[1]:2-11.

6. “Gradual change (i.e., small change within kinds of creatures, such as size and color) has been observed to occur in nature, macroevolutionary change (i.e., evolution between distinct kinds of creatures, such as reptile to bird, fish to amphibian, or ape to man) has not been observed, and accepting it as true is a leap beyond the actual evidence.

7. (2013), “‘Unlike Naturalists, You Creationists Have a Blind Faith,’” *Reason & Revelation*, 33[7]:76-83.

8. “The Naturalist’s Self-Contradiction,” *Reason & Revelation*, 32[5]:53.

9. “Creation as a Naturalist,” Apologetics Press, <https://apologeticspress.org/APContent.aspx?category=12&article=5050>.

[cle=5050&topic=296](https://apologeticspress.org/APContent.aspx?category=12&article=5050).

10. “Existence of God” category on the Apologetics Press Web site (<http://www.apologeticspress.org/APContent.aspx?category=12>).

11. “Admissions,” *Reason & Revelation*, 37[12]:134-143.

12. p. 52 of Jeff Miller (2014), “Bill Nye/Ken Ham Debate Review: Tying Up Really Loose Ends,” *Reason & Revelation*, 34[4]:38-59. For further examples of recent, tangible Creation fieldwork involving making geology predictions that were verified in the field, see the August, 2014 issue of *Discovery*, our magazine for children: http://apologeticspress.org/pub_dm/08012014/d1408.pdf.

13. “Fallacies,” <http://www.logicalfallacies.info/relevance/appeals/appeal-to-authority/>.

14. “As used in this article, it is highly advised that you read the author’s book, *Science vs. Evolution* (including the appendices), which was written, in part, to equip creationists for just such a scenario as the one this article is addressing.

15. *Earth’s Catastrophic Past* (by Andrew Snelling, Ph.D. University of Sydney, geologist); *Faith, Form, and Time* (by Kurt Wise, Ph.D. Harvard University, paleontologist); *Genetic Entropy and the Mystery of the Genome* (by John Sanford, Ph.D. University of Wisconsin-Madison, population geneticist); *Grand Canyon: Monument to Catastrophe* (by Steve Austin, Ph.D. Pennsylvania State University, geologist); *Science vs. Evolution* (by Jeff Miller, Ph.D. Auburn University, thermal scientist/biomechanical engineer); *Starlight and Time* (by Russell Humphreys, Ph.D. Louisiana State University, physicist); *Taking Back Astronomy* (by Jason Lisle, Ph.D. University of Colorado, astrophysicist); *The Young Earth* (by John Morris, Ph.D. University of Oklahoma, geological engineer); *Understand the Pattern of Life* (by Todd Wood, Ph.D. University of Virginia, biochemist).

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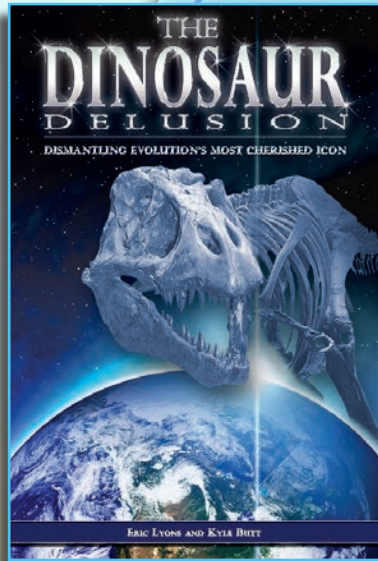
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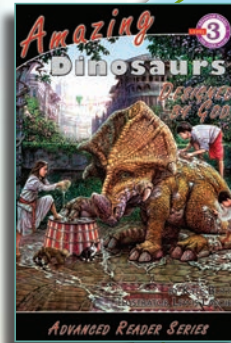


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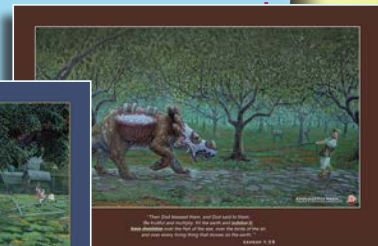
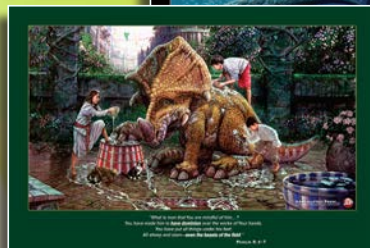
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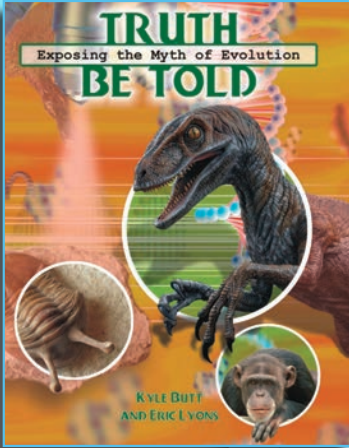
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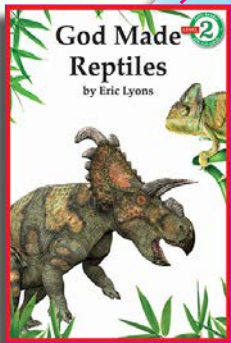
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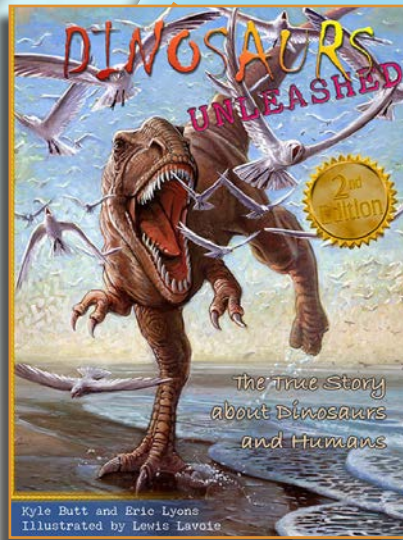


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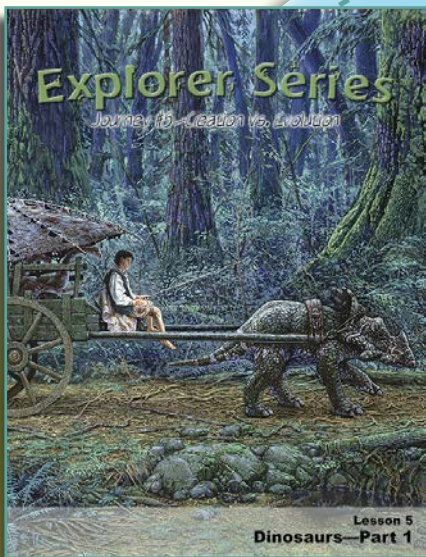
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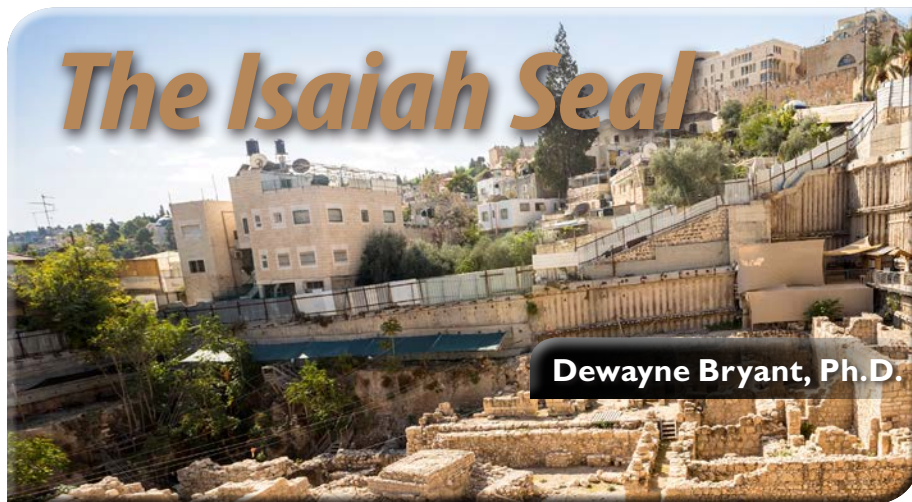
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[EDITOR'S NOTE: Two of the following three articles were written by A.P. auxiliary staff writer Dewayne Bryant who holds degrees from Lipscomb University (B.A. in History, M.A. in Bible), Reformed Theological Seminary (M.A.), and a Ph.D. in Biblical Studies with an emphasis in Old Testament from Amridge University. He has done additional coursework in Biblical and Near Eastern Archaeology and Languages from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, and participated in archaeological excavations at Tell El-Borg in Egypt. He holds professional memberships in the American Schools of Oriental Research, the Society of Biblical Literature, the Archaeological Institute of America, and the International Society of Christian Apologetics.]

THE discipline of archaeology serves as a source of continuing discovery and fascination. Each year, teams of archaeologists descend upon sites around the world to see what great new discoveries might be made. With each season, scholars learn more and more about the ancient world. This includes information about the Bible and the context in which it was written.

The March-June 2018 issue of *Biblical Archaeology Review* featured a story about the discovery of a 2,700-year-old seal impression

featuring the name “Isaiah,” which also appeared to identify this individual as a prophet. The clay seal impression (called a *bullā*) was discovered in excavations directed by Eilat Mazar near the southern end of the Temple Mount.¹ Bullae like the one bearing Isaiah’s name were used to seal documents and storage containers, but also served as receipts.

The Isaiah bulla is damaged, but a great deal of information can be gleaned from the impression. It features three registers (sections). Most of the top register is missing, but depicts what appears to be a grazing doe, a symbol of blessing in ancient Judah. The second depicts the name *Yēsha’yah[u]* (the full Hebrew form of the name Isaiah). The final letter is missing, but no other interpretation is feasible. The final register at the bottom is damaged, but the letters *ny* can be seen clearly. Unfortunately, the final letter is missing, meaning that the last word on the seal may be interpreted either as *navi* (“prophet”) or the proper name “Navi,” which could refer to either a person (such as a father) or a place of residence.

Taking note of the difficulties in interpreting the inscription, Mazar argues that it is unlikely that the inscription could be interpreted

as “Isaiah of/from Navi” or “Isaiah, son of Navi” (if this were the case, it could not be the Isaiah of the Bible, whose father was named Amoz). Of the three possible interpretations, Mazar argues that “Isaiah the prophet” is the most likely.

Mazar’s body of work includes the discovery of numerous finds with biblical connections, including an intact bulla bearing the name “Hezekiah [son of] Ahaz, king of Judah.” In a 2015 news conference, Mazar hailed the seal as “the closest as ever that we can get to something that was most likely held by King Hezekiah himself.”² It is worth noting that the Hezekiah seal and the recently discovered Isaiah seal were found only about 10 feet apart in the same archaeological context. As King Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah were contemporaries, and interacted with each other (2 Kings 20:1-19), it is reasonable to assume that inscriptions bearing their names would be found in close proximity to one another.

Such discoveries are not uncommon. In fact, numerous seal impressions have been found, many of them bearing the names of figures known from the pages of Scripture. In excavations from 2005-2008, Mazar discovered two different inscriptions bearing the names “Jehucal, son of Shelemiah, son of Shovi” and “Gedaliah, son of Pashur” only a few yards apart. The prophet Jeremiah mentions that both men served as officials in the administration of King Zedekiah, the last king of Judah before the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem in 587/586 B.C. (Jeremiah 38:1).

While some scholars urge caution in making the connection between the original owner of the Isaiah seal and the biblical prophet

too hastily,³ others like Mazar are confident that the seal does, in fact, mention the beloved prophet. Robert Cargill, archaeologist and associate professor of Classics at Iowa State University and editor of *Biblical Archaeology Review*, stated, “if you’re asking me, I think she’s got it. You’re looking at the first archaeological reference of the prophet Isaiah outside of the Bible.”⁴ The fact that the Isaiah bulla was found in the same archaeological context as that of a seal impression belonging to King Hezekiah helps place the burden of proof on critics who would argue that the seal does not refer to the prophet.

While the Isaiah bulla does not prove the accuracy of Isaiah’s predictions or his inspiration as a prophet of God, it does demonstrate the accuracy of the biblical narrative and the Bible’s internal chronology. This should come as no surprise to believers, who are accustomed to seeing archaeological discoveries confirm the truthfulness of Scripture.

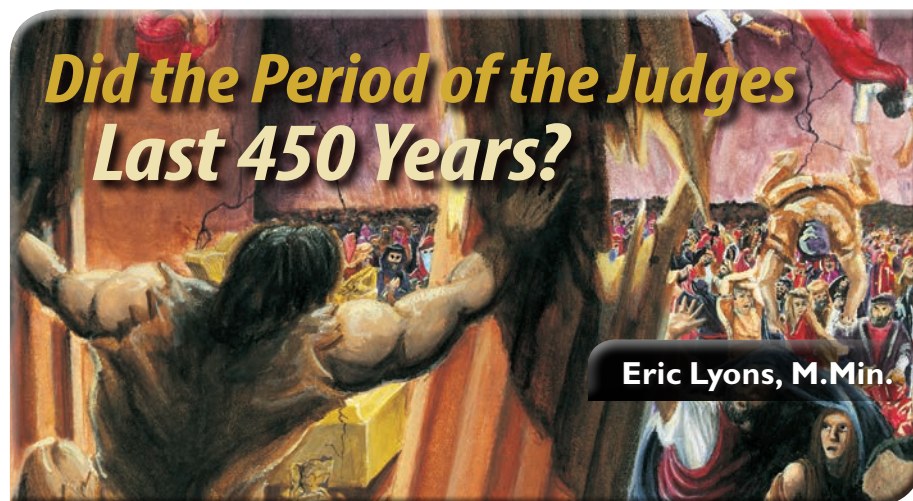
ENDNOTES

¹ Isaiah’s Signature?” *Biblical Archaeology Review*, 44[2-3]:65-73, 92, March-June.

² Name of Judean King Found in Jerusalem,” *The Times of Israel*, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/seal-bearing-name-of-judean-king-found-in-jerusalem/>.

³ Putative Bulla of Isaiah the Prophet: Not so Fast,” <http://www.rollstonepigraphy.com/?p=796>.

⁴ Find of Biblical Proportions, Seal of Prophet Isaiah Said Found in Jerusalem,” *The Times of Israel*, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/in-find-of-biblical-proportions-proof-of-prophet-isaiah-believed-unearthed/>.



ACCORDING to Acts 13:20, God gave Israel judges for “about 450 years” (NKJV). However, 1 Kings 6:1 indicates that Solomon, the third king of Israel, was in the fourth year of his reign 480 years “after the children of Israel had come out of the land of Egypt.” When we subtract the 40-year reigns of King Saul and King David from 480 (Acts 13:21; 1 Kings 2:11), we are left with only 400 years. What’s more, if the years of the conquest of Canaan as well as the final years of Joshua and his generation were deducted from the remaining 400 years (Joshua 24:29-33; Judges 2:7-10), the period of the judges appears **far less** than the 450 years Paul stated in Acts 13:20. Was he mistaken? What can we make of the apparent conflict between these two verses?

Similar to the logical answers to other alleged Bible contradictions,¹ this particular question can reasonably be resolved by noting the differences in Bible translations. While the King James and New King James versions (which generally follow later manuscript evi-

dence) place the 450 years during the period of the judges (“he gave them judges for about four hundred and fifty years”—NKJV), many other translations, including the ASV, NASB, ESV, RSV, and NIV, place this 450 years **before** the time of the judges. For example, consider the ESV’s translation of Acts 13:17-20:

The God of this people Israel chose our fathers and made the people great during their stay in the land of Egypt, and with uplifted arm he led them out of it. And for about forty years he put up with them in the wilderness. And after destroying seven nations in the land of Canaan, he gave them their land as an inheritance. **All this took about 450 years.** And **after that** he gave them judges until Samuel the prophet.²

On what basis do the ESV and other translations place the 450 years **prior** to the time of judges? In short, on the manuscripts that are generally accepted as earlier and (thus usually) better. Respected Greek scholar A.T. Robertson commented on Acts 13:19-20 noting that the oldest manuscripts

(i.e., those that were copied earlier in history), including the big three uncials³ (manuscripts known as Vaticanus, Sinaiticus, and Alexandrinus),⁴ place the 450 years “**before** ‘after these things’ [or ‘after that’—EL] and so in verse 19. This is the true reading.”⁵

The 450 years that Luke recorded that Paul mentioned in his sermon in Antioch of Pisidia refers, not to the period of the judges, but to what Paul had been discussing from the beginning of his lesson (Acts 13:17) up to the point at which he noted the 450 years. And how can we logically break down these 450 years? By doing some elementary math: Abraham’s descendants were oppressed in a foreign land for 400 years (Acts 7:6); they wandered in the wilderness for 40 years (13:18); which means it took them about 10 years to conquer the seven nations in the land of Canaan and receive their inheritance (13:19). “**All of which took** about four hundred and fifty years” (13:19, NASB).

There is no contradiction between Acts 13:20 and 1 Kings 6:1. The question arises only because of a translation problem based on inferior manuscript evidence. The 450 years in Acts 13 covers from the oppression of Abraham’s descendants to inheriting the land of Canaan, while the 480 years of 1 Kings 6:1 includes the time from Israel’s escape from Egypt, to their conquest of Canaan, to the entire period of the judges (“some three and one half centuries”),⁶ through the first 80 years of the United

Kingdom (Acts 13:21; 1 Kings 2:11).

ENDNOTES

¹ Eric Lyons (2009), “Does God Tempt People?” <http://www.apologeticspress.org/AllegedDiscrepancies.aspx?article=2679&b=Genesis>.

² Emp. added.

³ Manuscripts of the New Testament known as uncials were those penned in large, capital Greek letters.

⁴ These important codices (manuscripts in book form, rather than in scroll form) are often referred to as “the big three” because of their old age (dating back to the fourth and fifth

centuries A.D.) and their volume of material. They “are of inestimable worth as witnesses to the New Testament books...and **all three have become known since the translation of the King James Bible**” [Neil R. Lightfoot (1999), *How We Got the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker), second edition, p. 45, emp. added].

⁵ A.T. Robertson (1930), *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker), 3:188, emp. added.

⁶ Wayne Jackson (2005), *The Acts of the Apostles: From Jerusalem to Rome* (Stockton, CA: Christian Courier), p. 156.



NAPOLEON once said that luck was the greatest attribute of the victorious general. The same could be said about the successful archaeologist. While archaeologists can make informed decisions about where to dig, some finds are purely accidental. In one such case, corroborating evidence of Hezekiah’s reforms was found in the form of an ancient toilet seat.

During the eighth century B.C., Hezekiah refurbished the Temple in Jerusalem and removed

elements of pagan worship throughout the land. The text states, “he removed the high places, broke down the pillars, and cut down the sacred pole” (2 Kings 18:4; cf. vs. 22). Additional evidence of these reforms can be found in the abolishment of a temple at Arad and the destruction of a horned altar at Beersheba,¹ as the existence of both violated the Mosaic Law (Deuteronomy 12:1-7; Exodus 20:25). Another product of these reforms can be found in a desecrated gate-shrine at the city of Lachish.



Main gate of Lachish

Lachish was the second most important city in ancient Judah. An expedition from Tel Aviv University in the 1970s and 1980s excavated part of the city gate, one of the largest ever found in Israel. The preserved remains of the massive, six-chambered gate stand 16 feet high. Further excavations at the site in 2016 revealed a destruction layer containing burnt mudbricks and dozens of arrowheads, evidence of the city's destruction in 701 B.C. by Assyrian armies under Sennacherib.²

Inside one of the chambers of the gate stood a shrine. This area was divided into two small rooms, one of which contained two horned altars desecrated before the Assyrian siege of the city cir. 701 B.C. Most of the altars' horns—horn-like protrusions at each of the four corners—were cut off, rendering them ceremonially useless (cf. Amos 3:14).

Inside a second room, identified as the "holy of holies," excavators discovered a square stone measuring 20 x 20 inches in size, with a hole in the middle. Fashioned into the shape of a seat, this is easily identified as an ancient toilet (other examples of such seats have been found in Israel and Jordan). Lab tests indicate that the stone

toilet in Lachish was never actually used by any of the city's inhabitants. Even though the placement of the toilet seat was symbolic, its inclusion desecrated the shrine.

Defiling a sacred space by turning it into a latrine is known from the Bible. Jehu desecrated a temple of Baal in this fashion during his time as king of Israel. The text states, "they demolished the pillar of Baal, and destroyed the temple of Baal, and made it a latrine to this day" (2 Kings 10:27).

The desecration of the shrine offers important information about the worship taking place at Lachish at the end of the eighth century B.C. Residents of Lachish—and the king in Jerusalem—were taking the worship of God seriously. They seem to have been following Mosaic prescriptions by eliminating competing places of worship outside of Jerusalem, such as those at Lachish, Arad, and Beersheba. Having a centralized place of worship would have

been of little concern to Israel's pagan neighbors, who worshipped their gods at a multiplicity of sites. However, this does point to the uniqueness of Israel's worship of God and her unwillingness to tolerate alternative forms of worship that controverted the stipulations made in the Mosaic Law.

Often it is said that truth is stranger than fiction. As odd as it may seem, it appears that evidence of a renewed dedication to the worship of God during the reign of Hezekiah has been found in an ancient toilet.

ENDNOTES

¹ David Rafael Moulis (2017), "Hezekiah's Religious Reform—In the Bible and Archaeology," *Bible History Daily*, <https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/ancient-cultures/ancient-israel/hezekiah-religious-reform-in-the-bible-and-archaeology/>.

² Saar Ganor and Igor Kreimerman (2017), "Going to the Bathroom at Lachish," *Biblical Archaeology Review*, 43[6]:58-59, November-December. See Isaiah 36-37.

SPEAKING SCHEDULES

Kyle Butt

May 1	Meridian, ID	(208) 887-4633
May 6	Athens, AL	(256) 232-1096
May 20	Tracy City, TN	(931) 592-9634
May 29	Soddy Daisy, TN	(423) 842-1044

Eric Lyons

May 4-6	Quitman, GA	(229) 263-7955
May 16	Alexander City, AL	(256) 234-6494

Dave Miller

May 6	Montgomery, AL	(334) 264-2985
May 20	Montgomery, AL	(334) 264-2985

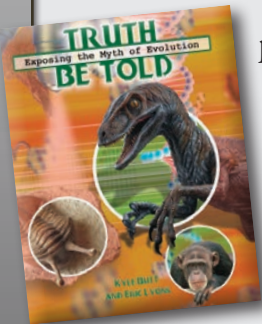
Jeff Miller

May 1,3,8,10,15,17	Denver, CO	(303) 986-5800
May 13	Montgomery, AL	(334) 264-2985



NOTE FROM

The Editor

*Spring Clearance Sale!*

Apologetics Press, Inc. is a non-profit organization dedicated to defending New Testament Christianity. This objective is pursued by producing materials that articulate truth while debunking erroneous challenges to the Christian Faith. This mission has been ongoing for nearly 40 years.

As a result of this purpose, we have always sought to keep our prices extremely low—well below market value. We wish we could simply give away all of our materials. However, funds are needed to pay printing costs, maintain our Web site and computers, and pay “the light bill.” But we endeavor to make our materials available to the public at the lowest prices possible, in addition to giving much, perhaps most, of our materials away free on our



Web site. Occasionally, we offer sales intended to attract more people to our materials in hopes of nurturing their souls in spiritual matters.

Consequently, we are conducting a Spring sale by offering a sampling of some of our materials at rock bottom prices. It is important that we liquidate our inventory, putting it to good use, rather than allowing it to sit in the warehouse, doing no one any good.

If you are unfamiliar with our products, or if you desire to make our materials available to acquaintances in your life, now is the time to take advantage of the lowered prices being offered for this Spring clearance sale.

Dave Miller

See Center Spread
for More Details